

The Coccia-Inserra Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Italian (K-12)

Application for the Year 2025

The Coccia-Inserra Award honors a teacher of Italian at the K-12 level, and is generously donated by the Coccia Foundation in the name and memory of its founder, Cav. Joseph Coccia, Jr., and by Mr. Lawrence R. Inserra, Jr. Founded in 1994 by Joseph and Elda Coccia, and now under the leadership of President Elisa Coccia, the Coccia Foundation aggressively pursues the preservation and promotion of Italian culture, in conjunction with the Coccia Institute for the Italian Experience in America at Montclair State University. Mr. Inserra, Chairman and CEO of Inserra Supermarkets, Inc., also contributes significantly to the rich field of Italian American Studies, having instituted in 2011 the Theresa and Lawrence R. Inserra Endowed Chair in Italian and Italian American Studies, also housed at Montclair State University.

Our donors will be offering \$5000 for the *Coccia-Inserra Award for Excellence and Innovation in the Teaching of Italian (K-12)* for academic year 2025. These funds are to be allocated as follows:

- a) \$2500 is to be used exclusively to advance the Italian language and culture curriculum and programming within the recipient's classroom;
- b) \$2500 is to be dedicated to the professional development of the winning teacher (for direct payment of academic fees to an institution of professional development in Italian language and culture at home or abroad).

Eligibility

The award is open to teachers who currently are:

- a. Members in good standing of one of the following:
 - i. AATI (American Association of Teachers of Italian)
 - ii. AAIS (American Association of Italian Studies)
 - iii. ITANJ (Italian Teachers Association of New Jersey)
- b. The applicant must be a full-time language teacher who is certified as a teacher of Italian and who must be teaching a minimum of two classes of Italian at the K-12 level.
- c. Applicants from past years are encouraged to reapply, and will be permitted to submit many of the same materials, with the exception of lesson plans. Letters of recommendation would need to be updated only if originally submitted more than two years ago.

Selection

A panel of notable educators has been established to oversee the process and select the award recipient.

- Dr. Andrea Baldi, Professor of Italian, Rutgers University (New Brunswick, New Jersey) [*Panel Chair*]
- Maria Gloria Borsa, Bellaire High School, Houston, Texas; Recipient of the 2020 Coccia-Inserra Teaching Award
- Gina Gallo, Bristol Central High School, Bristol, Connecticut; Recipient of the 2016 Coccia-Inserra Teaching Award
- Dr. Mary Sisler, Visiting professor of Italian, Drew University (Madison, NJ)

Application Submission Process

Applicants will submit all their supporting materials and video links via [this Google Form Application](#). Please note that you will not be able to submit the application until all required fields are fulfilled. Applicants may only submit ONE (1) Google Form submission.

Note: It is important that an email be sent to **both** Coccia Institute Director, Professor Mark Rotella at rotellam@montclair.edu, AND the Coccia Institute Program Coordinator, Cristina Latino at coccia-assistant@montclair.edu notifying both of them of your submission of the application. They will confirm receipt and ensure materials have been submitted properly.

Supporting Material

It is the responsibility of the applicant to assemble the following supporting material in the order listed:

SECTION A: Nominee Application Form

SECTION B: Letters of Support – Attach a total of **three (3) letters** from the following individuals:

- one (1) letter from an administrator (preferably a supervisor of foreign languages) **OR** one (1) letter from a colleague (who can support in detail the nominee’s exceptional qualities)
- two (2) separate letters from two students whom the nominee has taught (or is currently teaching).

If re-applying after more than two years ago, at least one new or updated letter of recommendation must be submitted. Letters from administrators/colleagues should attest to your strengths as an educator. Letters from students are most helpful if they contain specific examples of the impact that the teacher’s work had on them and on their classmates in learning Italian and/or appreciating the Italian language and culture

SECTION C: Nominee’s Resume of no more than two (2) pages.

SECTION D: Personal Statement – A 1-2 page summary of candidate’s teaching philosophy, including learning outcomes. Specific examples would be most helpful.

SECTION E: Lesson Plan Sample – The teacher’s effectiveness as demonstrated in sample lesson plans that conform to the standards of the Department of Education or other such entity in the state in which the applicant teaches. The lesson plans should address oral and written communication. These plans should evidence:

1. goals and activities that inspire and engage students in their own learning
2. use of technology and 21st-century skills to enhance the students’ learning experience
3. assessment that reflects current practice.

Please note: If you are re-applying from a previous year, you must submit a new lesson plan.

SECTION F: Involvement Outside the School – Please include any documentation that demonstrates your ACTIVE involvement with professional organizations and the promotion of the Italian language and culture (e.g., presentations, workshops, administrative duties, public relations work, Italian Honor Society or Italian club at your school, etc) that have benefited the Italian program and its students. Please also include if you have created opportunities for community and/or parent participation in your Italian program (e.g., film night, festival), where parents and other community members are invited.

SECTION G: Instructional Innovations – Provide evidence of effective instruction practice via supervisor and/or principal’s classroom observation report, student comments/letters, and/or teacher’s self-evaluation and reflections.

SECTION H: Any documentation (certificates, proof of participation) from Professional Development events, either as an attendee, and/or as a presenter, facilitator, workshop leader, etc.

SECTION I: Other documentation, e.g., copies of newspaper articles or other materials (including web sites links), highlighting accomplishments of candidate, if available.

NEW THIS YEAR: The application will be split into two rounds, where teachers will submit materials from Section A-Section I by Saturday, February 15th, 2025 at 11:59pm via [this Google Form submission](#).

SECTION J: Recorded Lesson – The 2025 Coccia-Inserra Award application process will follow a new format in lieu of the previous video submission requirement. Our panel of judges will review and evaluate all of the preliminary applications. As part of their review, the judges will select the three top applicants and invite them to arrange a Zoom call with the Coccia Institute Program Coordinator, Cristina Latino, for a live observation of their Italian class. The Zoom meeting, which will last between 10-15 minutes, will be recorded and shared with the judges for their review. The video will not be shared with or distributed to anyone beyond the panel for the award. Permission forms must be sent home if the School or the Board does not already have in place a policy about students appearing in promotional materials. Once notified of their successful preliminary submission, the finalists are encouraged to arrange a Zoom meeting as early as possible with the Coccia Program Coordinator, and no later than **Thursday, May 15th, 2025**. It is recommended that the laptop on which the Zoom call will be held is fully charged before the meeting begins, is strategically positioned to receive the best angle of the live lesson, and all notifications that could disrupt the call be muted. The Zoom meeting does not need to be projected onto a projector.

- i. **Each finalist must also submit a description** (not to exceed one page) of the lesson that the panel will view. Please tell us about the students, their level, and the learning goals for the lesson we are watching. This information will help the panel contextualize what they are watching.
- ii. **The most successful lesson will display meaningful classroom interaction between the teacher and students.** It is important to note that the lesson should not display a scripted tone, whereas it is intended to reflect the daily routine and organic teaching style of the applicant supported by attentive and positively reinforced student interaction. In all, it should allow the judging committee to briefly “sit” in the classroom to observe the effectiveness of the methods and strategies used by the instructor.
 - a. **As a reference, here is the 2021 Coccia-Inserra Teaching Award recipient, [Antonietta Gliubizzi’s video](#).**

Please note: ONLY the above stated documents will be accepted in a completed nomination packet. No additional documents will be accepted.

IMPORTANT DATES

Preliminary Application Deadline: **Saturday, February 15, 2025 by 11:59pm**
Note: All application materials must be submitted electronically via the Google Form application [found here](#). Applicants may only submit ONE (1) Google Form submission.

Lesson Recording Deadline: **Thursday, May 15, 2025**

Winner Notification: The winner and runner-ups will be notified by mid-June.

Award Presentation: **Friday, October 17, 2025** at the professional development symposium: ***Teaching Italian: Symposium / Workshops for Instructional Materials Meeting XVIII*** (University Hall Conference Center, Montclair State University)
Please note: The recipient’s travel and lodging expenses will be assumed by the Coccia-Inserra Award committee.